

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT
Report for December 1945

Efforts were begun with Mayor Murphy to forestall any discrimination against members of minority groups in employment connected with building and renovation plans of the city of Newark, and other buildings that the city is a party to through tax-moratoriums, etc. The Industrial Relations Secretary has called on Mayor Murphy to lend his efforts directly toward assuring members of minority groups that there will be no discrimination committed, aided, or abetted by the Building Trades Unions. These efforts are continuing in January.

In the company of the new Executive, the Industrial Relations Secretary attended a hearing in the State House, Trenton, on unemployment compensation benefits, which was prompted by charges from industrial organizations that reconversion is being allowed down because industries can't get workers which, in turn is because too many persons are drawing unemployment compensation. Representatives of industries in the state, attempted to prove that workers were receiving unemployment benefits instead of working, and that benefits are being paid ineligible people - ineligible if for no reason other than the fact that jobs for them are available. The Industrial Relations Secretary spoke to bring the attention of all to the fact that people have a right to choose the type of work they want, from work they are qualified for, and are willing to do. The jobs industry states are available, are normally unattractive and low-paid. He pointed out that social workers would like to impress that assembled group with the importance of the increased burden on the social institution of our communities, when people are forced to accept what they neither want nor can live on; that regardless of statements of several industry representatives present, employment office figures show that the usual starting rate is as low as 65¢ an hour for men, and 50¢ an hour for women, Men or women with families to support cannot do so at those wages - not with our present cost-of-living.

Within the ten-day period allowed for filing briefs, the Industrial Relations Secretary released a complete statement showing actual conditions in the Newark area. The statement was given good coverage by the white and Negro press, and included the signed statement of a Veteran, who had served in the army for three years and three months, who could not find a job either through the U.S.E.S. or the N.J. Urban League.

So far, no changes have been made in Unemployment Commission regulations as urged by certain industrial groups. We should, however, expect to hear more of such attempts. They will not be silenced until the question of U.S.E.S. return to the states is completely settled and any decision connected thereto is effected. We must not be blind to present attempts to force Negroes back into household employment at any low-rate and regardless of other working conditions.

The Employment Problems Committee had one meeting in December, at the N.J. Urban League. The Committee of one hundred is being set up, which will include persons of all groups who are apt to hear of specific cases of discrimination, will acquaint persons with the existence of a State Division Against Discrimination to help them, and actually channel the case to the Employment Problems Committee.

The Industrial Relations Secretary is stimulating a Conference on Household Employment. He has asked the YWCA to co-sponsor the conference and allow it to meet at the YWCA building at 53 Washington St. The tentative (unofficial) acceptance has already been made, for sometime the latter part of February or early March. Present plans call for cooperative participation by about twenty civic organizations and agencies. The conference audience is hoped to comprise a representative number of persons who are employers of household workers. Their approval will be sought of a set of minimum standards for household employment that is being worked out by the Industrial Relations Secretary and representatives of club women's organizations. Interest is already good.

Nothing of significance occurred in the Industrialists' Program during December. Telephone conversations were carried on with two corporation Presidents, about related matters. The Secretary finds it impossible to give due time to the several important aspects of the Industrial Relations Program. Here, again, is the question of a full-time assistant. Need we all ask ourselves, "do we really want this Program to be successful?"

The gamut of problems worked on by the Secretary from month to month, shows no change. The Industrial Relations Department seems to be the last resort, as far as problems in anyway involving employment are concerned, for innumerable Negroes within a radius of fifteen miles of Newark city limits. Strangely enough the solution of their problems affects, favorably, the person within Newark city limits we have a first responsibility to. The problems are the same, the solution to either helps both. However, this increases the actual amount of service rendered by the department. It is difficult to recapture the details of any good number of these cases. They are jammed in on the Secretary's thinking without any time for making records of them. For agency efficiency, we have a question here too, a question of the value of records. The Secretary feels they are needed, they are the back-bone of intelligent, modern, skilled social work. It shows, as does the question above, that assistance is sorely needed.

Some Christmas cheer was added to the lives of some thirty youngsters as a result of receipt of sets of toy trains from the Urban League. The Industrial Relations Secretary secured some five-hundred train pieces that had been discarded by their manufacturer, a company in continual touch with the Industrial Relations office. The Secretary secured the services of seven Boy Scouts from Robert Treat Council, who came through falling snow and drifts, assembled two dozen sets, and had a good time doing it. The Newark Star Ledger sent a photographer who took pictures of the scouts in action. The Newark Evening News carried an interesting story on it. It was Christmas.

Other activity of the Industrial Relations Secretary included: one public address; one address to U.S.E.S. Managers meeting; plans for and participation in four meetings of related community groups.

With only three weeks of normal activity - the other being "Christmas Holiday" week, there were 24 men registering for jobs or vocational guidance 8 (or 1/3) were veterans. Of the 8 veterans, 4 came for vocational guidance work. Twenty-eight female job applicants were seen. December, 1945 is the first month of the past 21 months, that applicants for clerical jobs exceeded the number of applicants for manual, non-white collar jobs. A total of fifty-four men and women were interviewed for jobs, and 39 referrals were made.